

# MaineDOT TRAFFIC ENGINEERING POLICY & PROCEDURE



## **SCHOOL BUS “STOP AHEAD” signs**

“School Bus Stop Ahead” signs may be erected on State or State Aid highways provided the following requirements are met:

1. Requests  
The municipal officers or school department must make requests for the signs in writing. The request should include the specific location of the bus stop and the direction of travel for the bus.
2. Eligible Locations  
In the review of a school bus stop, the Department will examine available stopping sight distance to the bus itself and to a vehicle stopped because of the bus.

The stopping sight distance available for the bus shall be the length of the unobstructed sight line of motor vehicle drivers (in normal daylight conditions). This is measured from the perspective of a hypothetical person seated in a vehicle traveling on the highway viewing the stopped school bus. The height of this person’s view is considered to be 3½ feet above the pavement. The height of the object being viewed is considered to be 8 feet above the pavement.

The stopping sight distance to a vehicle stopped because of the bus shall be the length of the unobstructed sight line of motor vehicle drivers (in normal daylight conditions). This is measured from the perspective of a hypothetical person seated in a vehicle viewing the vehicle in their travel lane stopped because of the bus. The height of the hypothetical person’s view is considered to be 3½ feet above the pavement. The height of the object being viewed is considered to be 4¼ feet above the pavement located 35 feet from the position of the stopped bus.

**Table 1 – Stopping Sight Distance**

Posted Speed (mph)	Sight Distance (feet)
20	165
25	210
30	260
35	315
40	370
45	435
50	505
55	580

Stopping sight distances may be adjusted based upon anticipated queuing, grade, bus design or other factors based upon sound engineering judgment.

A school bus stop that has sufficient stopping sight distance, for both the bus and the stopped vehicle for the posted speed limit as set forth in Table 1, shall be deemed safe. A School Bus Stop Ahead sign is not warranted for such locations.

In the case of a school bus stop that does not have sufficient stopping sight distance for the stopped car but does have sufficient stopping sight distance to the bus, the Traffic Engineering Section will try to relocate the bus stop as a first course of action. This is ideally accomplished without causing excessive travel distance by either the school children or the bus. It is preferable to have a child walk a short distance to a safe bus stop location than jeopardize the safety of all the children on the stopped school bus. If relocation is not possible then a "School Bus Stop Ahead" sign may be installed.

In the case of a school bus stop that does not have sufficient stopping sight distance for the bus, the Traffic Engineering Section will try to relocate the bus stop as a first course of action. This is ideally accomplished without causing excessive travel distance by either the school children or the bus. If relocation is not possible then the Traffic Engineering Section shall inform the municipality or school district in writing that the school bus stop is unsafe and recommend its discontinuance. An alternative choice may be the installation of a bus activated flashing light and a "School Bus Stopped Ahead When Flashing" sign. This installation would be the responsibility of the municipality or school district.

It is the Department's belief that school buses should not be stopping or turning in places where it is necessary to depend upon a sign for the safety and protection of a bus and its occupants. The traveling public's reaction to these signs is not sufficiently positive to permit the safety of the school bus to depend upon them. Stopping or turning locations should be selected with sufficient sight distance to make the school bus visible. The sighting of a stopped school bus will have a greater effect upon the approaching driver than will a traffic sign posted beside the road.

3. Installation of Signs

These signs are placed on State and State Aid highways only after a review of the locations by the Traffic Engineering Section and only if the review indicates the need for such a sign and relocation of the bus stop is not an option.

4. Local Responsibilities

a. The town or school district officials shall agree to remove these signs from the highway during the summer months when the schools are not in session. Failure to comply with these provisions, by July 1 of each year, shall be sufficient reason for the Department to remove the "School Bus" signs. All sign installations shall be followed by the attached form letter outlining this policy.

b. The town or school district officials shall review the locations of these signs each year and eliminate any that are no longer needed.

c. The cost of these signs shall be borne by either the town or school district. The Department of Transportation sign erectors will install the approved signs and the requesting officials will be billed at the Department's cost for the sign and installation charges. The charge is currently \$150 per sign installation.

**Revised and adopted October 15, 2008**